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# **The Importance of Liberty Is Not in Its Value**

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**Working Paper  
4/2014**

LUISS Guido Carli / Department of Political Science  
Working paper n. 4-2014  
Publication date: June 2014  
*The Importance of Liberty is Not in Its Value*  
© 2014 Gianfranco Pellegrino  
ISBN 978-88-6856-019-5

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LUISS University Press – Pola s.r.l. a socio unico  
Viale Pola 12, 00198 Roma  
Tel. 06 85225485  
e-mail [lup@luiss.it](mailto:lup@luiss.it)  
[www.luissuniversitypress.it](http://www.luissuniversitypress.it)

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF LIBERTY IS NOT IN ITS VALUE

Gianfranco Pellegrino\*

## Abstract

Ian Carter defended

*Independence*: Freedom has value independently of the value of the actions one is free to do, or of any other consequence. This value gives us reasons to care for freedom.

The main purpose of this paper is a defence of the thesis that freedom's relevance can be fully explained in terms of the value of the actions one is free to do. Accordingly, *Independence* is false. I shall propose an alternative view, by arguing that in relevant cases freedom merely acts as an *enabler* of the value of the actions one is free to perform. Freedom is a condition needed to perform valuable actions, but it does not contribute any value to the overall value of states of affairs. Lacking freedom, certain actions that would be valuable when freely performed lose their value.

## Summary

Introduction. – 1. The independent or non-specific value of liberty. – 2. Against the independent or non-specific value of liberty. – 3. Holism and the importance of liberty. – 4. The importance of liberty and its measurement.

## Keywords

Freedom, value, measurement, liberalism, additivity, holism.

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## Introduction

Why does freedom matter? Does freedom has a value for its own sake? Or can its relevance be reduced to the valuable consequences freedom brings about? Is it good to be free just because, by being free, one can do a number of other valuable things? Or is it important to be free, no matter what one is going to do with such freedom? These questions have been frequently discussed in debates on freedom and its importance, and many competing claims have been made to address them.<sup>1</sup> Prominently, Ian Carter and Matthew H. Kramer defended the following three claims:

*Independence:* Freedom's value cannot be reduced to the value of the actions the free person actually performs or is able to perform. Freedom has value independently of the value of the actions one is free to do, or of any other consequence. This value gives us reasons to care for freedom.<sup>2</sup>

*Measurement:* Freedom can be measured. Freedom is a quantitative attribute of agents, whose extent can be determined with sufficient precision.<sup>3</sup>

*Symmetry:* There is a symmetry between the value and the extent of freedom. Freedom's extent determines its value. A greater freedom has greater value.<sup>4</sup>

The main purpose of this paper is to defend the thesis that while freedom does matter, it has no value in itself. Freedom's relevance can be fully explained in terms of the value of the actions one is free to do. Accordingly, *Independence* is false. Or at least, this is what I am going to argue. In particular, I am going to put forward, and defend, the following view:

*Importance:* Freedom is important because it enables other valuable features to contribute their value to the overall value of states of

affairs. The greater the freedom the agent has, the greater the value of other valuable features of her life.

In doing this, I don't reject *Measurement*. Neither am I denying that there could be ways of measuring how much freedom an agent has, nor am I dismissing the relevance of providing a view of the measurement of freedom. Indeed, I am assuming a simplified version of Carter's view on measurement. In particular, I am going to assume that:

- a. Being free is (among other things) to have *options* — i.e. combinations of compossible available (i.e. unconstrained) actions. Call this assumption *freedom as options*,<sup>5</sup>
- b. The wider the extent of the combinations of options open to an agent is (the higher the proportion of conceivable compossible actions he is not prevented from performing), the greater the freedom one has. Call this assumption *the measure of freedom*,<sup>6</sup>

Carter suggests that freedom's value is *non-specific*: the value of freedom cannot be reduced to the value of specific freedoms to perform valuable actions. In what follows, I shall use Carter's label 'non-specific value' to refer to the value of liberty according to *Independence*.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of this paper, I consider *Symmetry*. It shall try to show that if *Independence* is false, then *Symmetry* is false, too. But whereas I provide a set of objections against *Independence*, my only challenge to *Symmetry* will be a side effect of the arguments against *Independence*. If *Independence* is false, and freedom has no value, then it cannot be the case that greater freedom has greater value. If so, *Symmetry* is false, or it is at least in need of qualification.

I proceed as follows. In § 1, I sketch an argument in favour of *Independence*. In § 2, I provide objections against *Independence*. In § 3, I propose an alternative view, by arguing that in relevant cases freedom merely acts as an *enabler* of the value of the actions one is free to perform. In other words, freedom is a condition needed to perform valuable actions, but it does not contribute any value to the overall value of states of affairs.<sup>8</sup> Lacking freedom, certain actions that would

be valuable when freely performed lose their value. However, this does not mean that freedom has value. Freedom merely *enables* value. It is a *condition of* value, not a *ground for* it. My general contention is that only this view of the relevance of freedom is able to account for relevant considered judgements on the matter. Finally, in § 4, I tackle *Symmetry*.

## 1. The independent or non-specific value of liberty

Consider

*The Two Communists* – Vasilij and Rose are two Communists living in the 70ies. Vasilij lives in Moscow under a dictatorial regime. Being in perfect agreement with the official doctrine of the Party, he does not feel any sense of coercion, and he is perfectly happy with his life. Rose, instead, lives in New York, in a liberal-democratic society. She is a member of the Communist Party, and entirely devotes her free time to propaganda. Like Vasilij, Rose does not feel any sense of coercion, and she is perfectly happy with her life in New York.<sup>9</sup>

You may say that Rose and Vasilij led equally valuable lives, because they could both do what they preferred.<sup>10</sup> Rose reached a valuable end by using as a means the liberty she enjoyed in US in the 1970s, whereas Vasilij did not need to use other means, as achievement of the valuable end was his only option. But this difference does not bear on the value of their lives. Both Rose and Vasilij reached the same valuable end, after all. As a consequence, their lives should have the same value.

Vasilij's and Rose's life can be represented as two sets of options, where  $S(\text{Rose})$  is the set of options open to Rose, and  $S(\text{Vasilij})$  is the set available to Vasilij (letters stand for options):

**Figure 1**

$S(\text{Rose})$	$a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, l$
$S(\text{Vasilij})$	$c$

Assume that:

- i.*  $c$  is the option consisting in being a Communist.
- ii.*  $c$  is the only valuable option. Options  $a, b, d, e, f, g, h, i, l$  are valueless – i.e. neither valuable nor worthless.

The suggestion that Rose and Vasilij led equally valuable lives brings about

**Ranking 1.**  $S(\text{Rose}) = S(\text{Vasilij})$

where ‘=’ means ‘as good as’. Many (if not most) people will find **Ranking 1** counter-intuitive.<sup>11</sup> Like Vasilij, Rose believes in Communism, and prefers to be an activist more than anything else. Assuming that satisfaction of subjective preference is a valuable achievement, then Vasilij gets something valuable. But it seems plausible to say that being a freer life, Rose’s life is better than Vasilij’s life. If so, even when both agents achieve the same valuable end, the freer agent lives a better life. Or at least, this seems a plausible view.<sup>12</sup> This view brings about

**Ranking 2.**  $S(\text{Rose}) > S(\text{Vasilij})$ .

where ‘>’ means ‘better than’. Now, consider the following argument:

#### Argument I

1. **Ranking 2** is more plausible than **Ranking 1**.
2. *Considered Judgments as Prima Facie Evidence* (from now onwards CJE): Philosophical theses gain (part of their) support from their capacity to account for plausible considered judgements. Coherence with many plausible considered judgements is *prima facie* evidence in favour of a given thesis, and contradiction with respect to plausible considered judgements gives *prima facie* evidence against it.<sup>13</sup>
3. In virtue of the assumption *ii.* above, so far as the value of options is concerned, Rose’s and Vasilij’s lives are equally good.

4. Rose's and Vasilij's lives differ as to freedom. In virtue of definition **b.** above, Rose's life is a freer life, because it contains a wider extent of options.
5. *No Difference in Value without Differential Factors* (from now onwards NVD): **a.** the value of something *results* from certain features of that thing and/or the context where that thing is placed (the value of a rare book results from the fact that there are not many similar books in the world where it exists); then, **b.** if two things are different for their value they should be different in other features (difference in value results from differences in other features. Assume that pleasant things are good. If so, equally pleasant foods, for instance, should be equally good).<sup>14</sup>
6. Rose's and Vasilij's lives differ in their value because they differ in the extent of freedom contained in each of them. Their difference in value results from their difference in freedom (in virtue of 1., 4. and 5.).
7. *Contributed Value* (from now onwards CV): When a feature *grounds* overall value (when the overall value of a state of affairs results from such a feature), it does so by *contributing* its value to the overall value.
8. In Rose's life, freedom contributes its value to the overall value, thereby making Rose's life better than Vasilij's one (in virtue of 6. and 7.).
9. In Rose's life, freedom has value but there is no difference in the value of available options (in virtue of 3. and of assumption **ii.**) . Call the value of freedom *freedom-value*, whereas the value of options is called *option-value*. In Rose's life, freedom-value does not result from option-value (in virtue of 5.). Accordingly, freedom-value should result from the extent of available options (thereby confirming the definitions provided in **a.** and **b.**), i.e. from the mere being freedom of the freedom present in Rose's life.<sup>15</sup> The value of the valuable option in Rose's life results from its features, whereas the fact that Rose has a given number of (valuable or not valuable) options grounds the value of her freedom.
10. Freedom's value is independent of the value of the options open to the agent. Freedom's value is non-specific.

10. is *Independence* and Argument I provides its support.



## 2. Against the independent or non-specific value of liberty

*Independence* seems to account for plausible judgments on cases such as *The Two Communists*. Indeed, this thesis is originally motivated by the fact that it seems to account for our considered judgments on the value of liberty (i.e. for the intuition that, *ceteris paribus*, it is better to have more options than fewer). However, there are cases where *Independence* actually runs against plausible judgments, thereby failing to meet the requirement established in CJE (which is premise 2. in Argument I).

Consider:

*Three Lives* – Ludwig is a gifted pianist. He played piano since he was five. He didn't choose this; he was simply put in front of a piano when he was barely able to understand what a musical instrument is. He did not know whether he could have preferred a different kind of life. Simply, for him, it is impossible to think about a different way of living. Surely, his life is rewarding and rich. However, it is not clear that this is the life he would have chosen if he were free to choose.

Franz is a violinist. He is quite gifted, but his life was less straightforward than Ludwig's. Being the son of poor Austrian peasants, he arrived late to music, and his musical talent emerged only when he was relatively old. However, he was devoured by the love for music, he chose an artistic life and in few years he made giant steps, becoming an acclaimed performer. To be true, he is less gifted than Ludwig, and less precocious, and a part of his life was dominated by valueless actions.

Wolfgang is a slacker, whose survival entirely depends on welfare. He is in this sad predicament after a series of failures, in a number of bizarre enterprises he embarked on. He arrived there through a succession of perfectly free choices, 'he freely flit from one passion to another,' (Hurka 2011a, 141) and as a consequence he is having a wholly pointless life.

If Ludwig's, Franz and Wolfgang's lives are represented as different sets of options, *Independence* would produce the following:

**Ranking 3.**  $[S(\text{Wolfgang}) = S(\text{Franz})] > S(\text{Ludwig})$

Ranking Wolfgang's life higher than Ludwig's one on account of the fact that it is a freer life seems implausible. The same holds for the claim that Franz life has the same value as Wolfgang's one. *Independence* implies that Ludwig's life is valueless, while Franz and Wolfgang's life have the same value. This seems counter-intuitive.

It seems more plausible that both Franz and Ludwig's lives are better than Wolfgang's life. This is so even if one claims that Franz life is better than Ludwig's life, because the former is freer than the latter. This view can be expressed in the following:

**Ranking 4.**  $S(\text{Franz}) > S(\text{Ludwig}) > S(\text{Wolfgang})$

But *Independence* cannot account for **Ranking 4**, and then it fails to meet CJE. Let's call this the *intuition objection*.

It might be objected that *Three Lives* is only a specific case, perhaps not very frequent and so irrelevant. Cases such as the *The Two Communists* are much more frequent, and *Independence* seems to account for our intuitive response to this sort of cases. In other words, even though *Independence* originates seemingly counter-intuitive judgements in some specific cases, it provides support for the general idea that a freer life is better than a less free life – and this general idea is obviously plausible.

However, *Independence* yields *systematically* implausible conclusions. If applied generally, *Independence* cannot but lead to counterintuitive judgements on the value of different lives, or sets of options. Consider the following sets of options:

**Figure 2**

S(1)	$a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, l$
S(2)	$c$
S(3)	$m, n, o, p$

S(4)	<i>b, d, e</i>
S(5)	<i>c, d</i>
S(6)	<i>a, b</i>

Assume that *c* is a valuable option, whereas the other options *have no value*. *Independence* suggests the following ranking:

**Ranking 5.**  $S(1) > S(3) > S(4) > [(S(5) = (S(6))] > S(2)$

In terms of option-value, S(3), S(4), and S(6) have no value — they are *valueless*. However, in terms of freedom-value, S(1), S(3) and S(4) are better than S(5) and S(6), which in their turn are both better than S(2), because in them the agent has a greater range of available actions. **Ranking 5** shows that, according to *Independence*, freedom-value diverges from, and is independent of, option-value, as sets like S(3), S(4) and S(6), which contain only valueless options, still have more freedom-value than S(2), which includes a valuable option — indeed, the only valuable one.

The independence of freedom-value from option-value established in **Ranking 5** may be regarded as a virtue, as it ensures freedom's non-specific value. But **Ranking 5** *annihilates* option-value, as it were. It zeroes up its contribution to the overall value of sets of options. This cannot be the case, because the value of options should have (at least) some impact on the overall value of the sets containing them. Even assuming that freedom has value independently of the value of options, the fact that a set of options contains a valuable option should make a difference.

Against **Ranking 5** the following argument can be employed:

#### Argument II

- A.  $S(5)=S(6)$  is false, because S(5) and S(6) have different features — S(5) contains one valuable option, S(6) contains only valueless options. In virtue of NVD, sets of options having different features should also be different in value.

- B.  $S(5) > S(6)$  is true, as  $S(5)$  contains (at least) one valuable option (this is again a conclusion deriving from NVD).
- C. if  $S(5) > S(6)$ , it cannot be irrational to claim that  $S(2) > S(6)$  — after all,  $S(2)$  also contains one valuable option.

Argument II produces the following ranking:

**Ranking 6.**  $S(1) > S(5) > S(2) > [S(3) = S(4) = S(6)]$

**Ranking 6** takes into account both freedom- and option-value, and it seems more plausible than **Ranking 5**. But it cannot be produced by *Independence*. If freedom has merely non-specific value (and *Independence* is true), then it seems that  $S(2)$  cannot be ranked higher than any other sets in Figure 2. In **Ranking 5**, the non-specific value of freedom zeroes up the impact of option-value on the overall value of sets of options. Freedom-value greedily erodes any other form of value. For this reason, it cannot provide an accurate representation of the overall value of sets of options and states of affairs. Let's call this the *greediness objection*.

Consider now the following sets of options, where  $c$  again is the only valuable option:

**Figure 3**

$S(7)$	$a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, l$
$S(8)$	$c$
$S(9)$	$f, g, b, i, l$
$S(10)$	$a, b, d, e$
$S(11)$	$c, d$
$S(n)$	$m, o, p, \dots, n$

According to *Independence*,  $S(n)$  is the best set. However,  $S_n$  contains only valueless options. But  $S_n$  is better than  $S(7)$  and, above all, it is better than  $S(8)$ . Indeed, it is far better than these sets of options (I am assuming that it contains a huge number of options). If one should choose between  $S(7)$  and  $S_n$ ,  $S_n$  should be chosen — at least for supporters of *Independence*.<sup>16</sup>

From what said so far it follows that a set containing a valuable option may be less valuable than any other set including only valueless options. So, if *Independence* is true, then we have reasons to prefer sets containing only valueless options over states of affairs where there are valuable options. This idea can be stated as follows:

*Liberal Repugnant Conclusion:* For any possible set of options containing one or more valuable options, there must be another larger set containing only valueless options whose freedom-value, if other things are equal, overrides the option-value of the former set, thereby making the latter more valuable overall than the former.

The liberal repugnant conclusion is paradoxical.<sup>17</sup> *Independence* seems to suggest that larger sets of valueless options should be systematically preferred to smaller sets containing valuable options, because of the greater freedom contained in those sets.<sup>18</sup> This cannot be true. I shall call this the *liberal repugnance objection*.

Taken together, the greediness objection and the liberal repugnance objection go against *Independence*, and they corroborate the intuition objection. It seems that *Independence* accounts only for some intuitions, but at the price of going against other equally plausible, and more general, judgements. Accordingly, *Independence* goes against CJE, and it loses the support given by Argument I. Indeed, this argument can now work against the thesis, not in its favour.<sup>19</sup> Claiming that freedom has value as such is not what is needed to account for our considered judgments, but it is rather a premise from which very implausible judgements follow.

### 3. Holism and the importance of liberty

Let's come back to *Three Lives*. It seems that the most plausible judgement about this case is as follows: Franz life is the best one, because he freely achieved valuable ends; Ludwig's life, despite its achievements, is worse because it lacks the remarkable liberty shown in Franz's life; Wolfgang's life is valueless. (This is **Ranking 4** above.) The problem with *Independence* is that it cannot account for this judgment. This inability spreads over in general, producing many implausible judgments, whose shape is represented in the greediness and the liberal repugnance objections. *Independence* cannot account for the value of options in certain lives, nor can it avoid bloating the value of freedom, till the point of declaring certain freer, but option-valueless lives, better than less free, but option-valuable lives.

I think that this *impasse* depends on a premise employed in Argument I, and in particular on premise 7, i.e. CV. This premise expresses the idea that whenever the presence of a given feature affects the value of a state of affairs, then this feature contributes its value to the overall state of affairs. In other words, any feature whose presence affects the overall value of a state of affairs is a *ground* of this value, a *value-making* feature.

However, CV can be challenged. Consider

*Bad Pleasures* – Dick is an acute and sophisticate moralist. He has a penetrating capacity to discern morally relevant features in complicate daily life situations. Most of times, he can indicate the right solution for intricate cases. But he is perverse: he is delighted in acting wrongly. He identify the right thing to do, and then does the opposite. In this way, he gains for himself the most exquisite pleasures.<sup>20</sup>

Assume that *Bad Pleasures* is plausible, and assume that, in general, enjoyment is valuable. Then, the fact that someone is delighted, or feels pleasure, is a value-making feature.<sup>21</sup> But in *Bad Pleasures* this is obviously not the case. The pleasures that Dick gets from his wrong-

doing are bad pleasures; they cannot be good things. Nevertheless, in many other cases, pleasures are good, and plausibly so.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, in *Bad Pleasures*, Dick's enjoyment makes his wrong-doing even worse: the fact that he enjoys his mischievous acts makes his conduct even more wrong than similar acts performed by someone who does not enjoy doing them.

If this account of what is going on in *Bad Pleasures* is correct, then we have to explain two things. First, we have to explain why a feature that usually is good (i.e. enjoyment) turned out to be a bad one, and second we have to explain why this makes things worse.

There are at least two general explanations we could appeal to. According to the

*Additive View*: The overall value of a state of affairs is the net balance resulting from adding up the separate values of its valuable features.

On this view, each feature of a state of affairs makes a contribution, whether positive or negative, to the overall value of the state of affairs. Each feature adds its (positive or negative) independent value to the overall value, and the overall value is the *result* of summing the values (or disvalues) of different features.<sup>23</sup> In *Bad Pleasures*, the additive view would suggest that the value of enjoyment is outweighed by the disvalue of wrongdoing, and this explains why we have the feeling that Dick's pleasures are bad ones. To be true, they are not bad, but their goodness is overbalanced by the badness of Dick's wrongs.

However, this story fails to explain the intuition that Dick's pleasures increase the badness of his wrongs. Which feature in the situation is contributing the added disvalue that we feel is resulting from Dick's perverse delight? Of course, one can invoke many other features, enriching the picture. For instance, it might be claimed that Dick's pleasure are undeserved, and that the missing fit between enjoyment and merit is what adds disvalue to the wrongs committed by Dick. Or it might be claimed that Dick's wrongs are producing

somebody's distress and that there is an unfair division of pleasures and pains where the wrongdoer is delighted at the expense of the suffering of innocent victims. All these factors — unfairness, innocence, and so on — may be contributing to the overall value of the state of affairs described in *Bad pleasures*, and the overall badness of it might be the result of these complex contributions.

The Additive view relies on a general thesis in value theory that can be stated as follows:

*Universality*: Any factor contributing as a part to the value of a whole keeps its value when moved into a different whole.<sup>24</sup>

I think that *Universality* is false, and as a consequence the Additive view is false too. Or at least I think this view is false of our phenomenology of value. When considering *Bad pleasures* we do not think that pleasures are good even in this case, but their goodness has been overbalanced by the badness of Dick's wrongdoing, and that their being something good going to someone not deserving it adds a badness to the already existing disvalue. We more simplistically think that those pleasures are bad ones, and that this is the reason for which they should not be experienced. Dick is liable to punishment for his wrongs, but for many of us he is liable to an extra blame for his pleasures in acting wrongly. I think this view cannot be accounted by the Additive view and *Universality*.

The Additive view and *Universality* are assumed in *Independence*. Premise 7 in Argument I sounds as follows:

*Contributed Value*: When a feature *grounds* value (when value results from it), it does so by *contributing* its value to the overall value.

CV can be interpreted as the idea that overall value comes from summing up the particular (positive and negative) contributions of the specific features of a given state of affairs. This is the Additive view. As already said, this view rests on the further claim that any factor keeps its value in whatever context it is. Recall the judgment that *Independence*



produced if applied to *Three Lives*. Franz life is the best, and is equal in value to Wolfgang's life, whereas Ludwig's life is the worst. This judgement can be explained in terms of the Additive view. Franz life is the best, because its value is the sum of the positive contribution of the value of freedom and the value of Franz achievements as an artist. However, Wolfgang's life, despite lacking achievements similar to Franz life, contains a great extent of liberty, whose value compensates for any missing achievement. The achievements in Ludwig's life cannot overbalance the disvalue of missing liberty, and this makes his life the worst ones. Freedom, then, keeps its value in each of those lives, and its value contributes to the overall value of them.

I think that this explanation has the same shortcomings of some of the explanations of *Bad Pleasures* given above. When considering Wolfgang's life we have the intuition of being in front of a completely wasted life. The fact that Wolfgang was free does not make it good. Indeed, the fact that he freely wasted his life adds something bad to it. But the Additive view and *Universality* would not explain what's wrong with Wolfgang's life so easily. Of course, also in this case we can make appeal to further factors, whose contribution turn the balance. For instance, it might be argued that a bad use of liberty strains the point of liberty itself, and that the disvalue coming from badly using a good thing could explain why we think Wolfgang's life is worse than Ludwig's one. After all, Wolfgang misused something good, whereas Franz was simply devoid of this good in his life. But misusing the good is worse than not having it.

However, my reaction here is similar to the one I voiced when considering *Bad Pleasures*. In considering *Three Lives*, we are thinking that Wolfgang's life is the worst *on account* of his liberty, and not *despite* it. *Independence*, the Additive view and *Universality* cannot account for this.

Consider a different general view of value:

*Holistic View*. The overall value of something derives both from the value contributed by its valuable features and from the presence of other enabling and disabling features.

This view rests on a distinction between features that have value, and contribute their value to the overall value of state of affairs, and features with no value, but whose presence enables or disables (intensifies or weakens) the contribution of valuable features. This distinction might be grasped by considering the following example. A specific sort of comradely jokes is one of the good things of a friendship. Indeed, you may say that complicity in these kinds of (often silly) jokes is a marking feature of friendship. Complicity in these things makes friendship good. It may be thought that a ‘cold’ friendship, where these jokes never occur, has less value for this very reason. Obviously, those jokes may be less funny, and sometimes even nasty and offensive, when told to people who are not your friends. Those jokes are such that the ground of their being funny is the presence of the butt and the friendly relations between the butt and the author of the joke. These jokes increase what is good in friendship, even though they are not good outside the friendship.

It might be claimed that in cases of this sort we have features whose presence enables the value of other features, whose value in its turn contribute to the overall value of the state of affairs. The presence of the butt, and the joke to be cracked, have no value in their own. But their existence enables some valuable features of friendship — camaraderie, mutual trust, lack of aggressive attitudes — to be activated and to make friendship the good thing that it is. Alternately, it might be said that these sorts of joke intensify the already existing value of camaraderie, which can be expressed in many other ways, of course, but is particularly apparent when these jokes are told, and enjoyed.<sup>25</sup>

If applied to *Bad Pleasures*, the Holistic view would suggest the following. Dick’s wrongs disable his pleasures from being good as they would be in other situations. Dick’s pleasures intensify the badness of his wrongs. Dick’s pleasures, then, are not value-making features: their presence is neither good nor bad, but it is rather able to make worse Dick’s wrongdoing. This view accounts for our considered judgement that pleasures in cases such as *Bad Pleasures* are not valuable, and that their presence makes worse what is happening, as compared to a case when the wrongdoer does not enjoy his misdeeds.

I claim that the Holistic view applies in many cases, even though not necessarily in all.<sup>26</sup> In particular, I submit that the Holistic view is the best way to describe cases in which freedom seems to have value as such. Let's come back to the two stories considered in this paper. In the *Two Communists* the most plausible judgment is that Rose's life is better than Vasilij's. It seems that this is the case on account of Rose's freedom in choosing to be a Communist in the 1970s US. However, if we compare Vasilij's life (and Ludwig's one) to Wolfgang's life, it seems that despite lack of freedom, Vasilij's life is not wasted, or not as much as Wolfgang's one. But if freedom has always a value, and its value cannot be reduced to the value of the achievements, then these judgments cannot be accepted. For Wolfgang's life cannot be wasted, as it contains more freedom than Vasilij's and Ludwig's lives. This is what suggests *Independence*.

But it might be suggested that freedom acts as an enabler or an intensifier of the value of certain options. The mere presence of freedom — the mere presence of a great extent of options — makes valuable (or more valuable) certain options. Many of us think that certain options are better if they can be freely chosen, and that the difference between Rose's and Vasilij's lives lies exactly in the fact that Rose (but not Vasilij) was able to choose to be a Communist. This intuition can be explained by claiming that freedom intensifies the value of options, or that it enables already valuable options to contribute their value. Accordingly, Wolfgang's life is worse because the already existing badness of his choices has been made worse by liberty. Vasilij's life is worse than Rose's, because the value contained in it is blocked by the absence of liberty. And so on.

The holistic view, applied to freedom, can give rise to the following claim:

*Importance:* Freedom is important because it enables other valuable features to contribute their value to the overall value of states of affairs. The greater the freedom the agent has, the greater the value of other valuable features of her life.

*Importance* can account for the most plausible judgements in many of the cases described in this paper. Consider again

**Figure 2**

S(1)	$a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, l$
S(2)	$c$
S(3)	$m, n, o, p$
S(4)	$b, d, e$
S(5)	$c, d$
S(6)	$a, b$

*Importance* would produce

**Ranking 6.**  $S(1) > S(5) > S(2) > [S(3) = S(4) = S(6)]$

which plausibly ranks sets with freedom over the set with a valuable option and over option-valueless sets. Similar outcomes would result from applying *Importance* to Figure 3.<sup>27</sup> These rankings are more plausible than those produced by *Independence*. This is a *prima facie* evidence in favour of *Importance* and the view it conveys.

Relying on the Holistic view, *Importance* discards CV. It is not the case that freedom always contributes its value to the overall value, and this for two reasons: because in general overall value does not derive from additive contributions of fixed valuable factors, and because freedom has no value as such, but it rather enables (or disables) different valuable things. *Importance* could be supported by Argument I in an amended form, i.e. without premise 7.<sup>28</sup>

It might be objected that *Importance* is a reductive view of the value of liberty, because it reduces the value of liberty to its being a means to other valuable things. Carter repeatedly argues that any view of this sort is wrong, because in many cases we feel that freedom's relevance cannot be wholly explained in terms of its valuable consequences.<sup>29</sup> However, *Importance* can avoid this charge. Saying that freedom enables the value of options, or of any other valuable things, does not amount to claiming that freedom is a means to bring about those valuable consequences. In the friendship example discussed above, the joke is not a means to bring about friendship, but rather a feature able to give friendship its value (or to increase its value). Likewise, freedom is not a means to a well-rounded life, but rather a condition able to making it possible.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4. The importance of liberty and its measurement

As said at the outset, Carter and Kramer defended the following claims:

*Independence:* Freedom's value cannot be reduced to the value of the actions the free person actually performs or is able to perform. Freedom has value independently of the value of the actions one is free to do, or of any other consequence., and this value gives us reasons to care for freedom.

*Measurement:* Freedom can be measured. Freedom is a quantitative attribute of agents, whose extent can be determined with sufficient precision.

*Symmetry:* There is a symmetry between the value and the extent of freedom. Freedom's extent determines its value. A greater freedom has greater value.

In this paper, I rejected *Independence*. This has no impact on *Measurement*. Indeed, I assumed that freedom can be measured, or at least that it amounts to having an extent of options open.

However, *Importance* affects *Symmetry*. Indeed, it forces a qualification. The reasoning is simple. If freedom is an enabler of other valuable

things, then the relevant difference is between cases when there is freedom and cases where freedom lacks. The measure of freedom has no impact on the overall value. Symmetry suggests that the value of freedom increases with the measure of freedom. This view aimed at expressing the idea that it is *ceteris paribus* better to have greater freedom than less.

*Importance* makes this idea less plausible, even though not completely wrong. Freedom is having options (this is definition a.). If so, a life with many options is a freer life. *Symmetry* would suggest that any freer life is, by being freer, *ceteris paribus* more valuable. *Importance* suggests that a freer life is not by the very definition more valuable. But a life containing more valuable options is better than a life containing less valuable options, of course. And it is a freer life. Then, *some* freer lives are better than *some* less free lives. Consider

**Figure 4**

S(12)	<i>a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, l</i>
S(13)	<i>c</i>
S(14)	<i>m, n, o, p</i>
S(15)	<i>b, c, e</i>
S( <i>n</i> )	<i>m, o, p, ..., n</i>

Applied to Figure 4, *Independence* would produce

**Ranking 9.**  $S(n) > S(12) > S(14) > S(15) > S(13)$ ,

whereas *Importance* would suggest

**Ranking 10.**  $S(12) > S(15) > [S(13) = [S(14) = S(n)]]$ .

I think *Ranking 10* is more plausible than *Ranking 9. Importance* would require a qualification of *Symmetry*, thereby obtaining the following:

*Quasi-symmetry*: Whenever valuable options are at stake, there is a symmetry between the value and the extent of freedom. Freedom's extent determines the overall value of valuable state of affairs. A greater freedom makes more valuable already valuable options.

The main intuition underlying the view that freedom is a quantitative attribute and it has a value that is not reducible to the value of the options the agent has, can be stated as follows. There are freer lives, and these lives are better simply because freer, and not only because they permit other valuable consequences. I think this intuition can be kept by claiming that freedom is a necessary condition in order that certain valuable options contribute their value to the state of affairs containing them. Less formally, the claim is that being free to act is better than being unfree, when one's options are independently valuable, whereas free wrongdoing is worse than coerced wrongs, and freedom applied to trifles is pointless. This is a more complicated wisdom than straightforward praise for the value of freedom. But it seems to be more true to facts.<sup>31</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See (Carter, Kramer, and Steiner 2007a; Carter, Kramer, and Steiner 2007b; Dworkin 1982).

<sup>2</sup> *Independence* could be spelled out in at least two different ways. According to *Final Value*: Freedom has value for its own sake, i.e. as an end in itself, independently of any further consequence that being free could have.

By contrast, according to the

*Non-specific Instrumental Value*: Freedom has *non-specific instrumental* value, i.e. it has value as a means to several possible ends, but its value is independent of the value of any specific end among those served.

The Final value thesis has been defended in (Hurka 2011, 143–9); see also (Carter 1999, 42–5, 58–9, 61). the Non-specific instrumental value thesis has been defended at length by (Carter 1999, 34–5, 44–5, 69; 2009, 167–9).

<sup>3</sup> See (Carter 1999, 3–5, 21, 31, 36, 171). Despite their agreement on *Measurement*, Carter and Kramer have different views about how liberty is to be measured. See (Carter 1999, chap. 7–8; Kramer 2003, chap. 5).

<sup>4</sup> See (Carter 1999, 11; 2005, 48, 52). To be true, the three theses are logically connected, according to Carter; see (Carter 1999, 169). I shall say something on this connection in § 4 below.

<sup>5</sup> See (Carter 1999, 15, 180–1). I am using ‘options’ to refer to combinations of available actions. I am not assuming that freedom coincides with freedom of choice. I am focusing on freedom *tout court*, not on freedom on choice. On this topic, see (Carter 2005, chap. 3).

<sup>6</sup> See (Carter 1999, 7, 15, 28, 173, 182).

<sup>7</sup> See (Carter 1999, 32–7). Notice that Carter does not state *Independence*. However, *Independence* subsumes under itself many theses that he defends and accepts; see in particular (Carter 1999, 33–4). Carter distinguishes between the specific freedom to do specific things and the freedom one has when it is considered independently of any specific thing the agent is free to do. The latter he defines ‘overall freedom’. Overall freedom is the amount of specific freedoms a given agent has, to be obtained by aggregating over the specific freedoms she has. Specific freedoms have value only in so far as the actions they allow are valuable, whereas a given amount of overall freedom, according to Carter, can have value independently of the value of the specific freedoms constituting it, namely independently of the value of the specific actions the agent having a given amount of overall freedom can perform. See (Carter 1999, 4, 11, 15–6, 28). *Independence* concerns overall freedom. In the main text, I am assuming the distinction between specific freedoms and overall freedom, despite not focusing explicitly on it. Anything I shall say here is to be understood as concerning overall freedom. Also, in this paper I shall not give detailed consideration to Matthew H. Kramer’s views on these same topics. Despite thinking that many of my claims applies also to Kramer’s view of the non-specific value of freedom, here I shall not produce detailed evidences for this view.

<sup>8</sup> Among value theorists, there are considerable disagreements about what sorts of things can have value. Here, I shall try to remain agnostic on this. I shall



interchangeably use different languages — namely, I shall say both that actions and freedom have value and that the states of affairs where someone is free to, and performs, certain actions have value. Often, I shall also make reference to the *fact* that one is free or that she performs a given action. I shall not tackle the metaphysical issue concerning whether or not actions can be reduced to states of affairs or whether or not facts and states of affairs coincide.

In addition, I am assuming that the features of a given state of affairs concur to give it its value. This may happen either because those features have value in their own, and their value contributes to the overall value of the state of affairs, or because they enable other features of the state of affairs to contribute their value. On this dichotomy between grounds for value and their enablers, see below § 3. Finally, with the locution 'overall value' I shall refer to the value of a state of affairs as it is determined by the (positive or negative) contribution of the value of each features of it. Cp. (Kagan 1988).

<sup>9</sup> Inspiration for this story is drawn from (Lethem 2013).

<sup>10</sup> I am here assuming that doing what one prefers is at least *prima facie* valuable. Nothing in my reasoning depends on this assumption, though. It might be assumed that Rose and Vasilij both led equally valuable lives, the value of their lives being independent of their actual preferences.

<sup>11</sup> On the relevance of intuitions about freedom, see (Carter 1999, 17–8, 95–100, 104–7, 111–4).

<sup>12</sup> See for instance (Hurka 2011, 140, 141).

<sup>13</sup> On this principle of justification, see (Cappelen 2012).

<sup>14</sup> For an early proponent of this, now quite shared, doctrine, see (Ewing, 1929, 166: 'the value of something cannot be different except as the result of some other difference'). On the idea of value *resulting* from features of the valuable thing, and on the difference between *resultance* and *supervenience*, see (Dancy 2000, 140; 1981, 367; 1993, 73). See also (Moad 2007)

<sup>15</sup> See (Carter 2009, 167) for the formulation in terms of “the being freedom’ of freedom.

<sup>16</sup> Applied to Figure 3, *Independence* would produce

**Ranking 7.**  $S(n) > S(7) > S(9) > S(10) > S(11) > S(8)$

A more plausible ranking would be

**Ranking 8.**  $S(7) > S(11) > S(8) > [S(9) = S(10) = S(n)]$

<sup>17</sup> See (Parfit 1984, 387–90).

<sup>18</sup> This does not amount to saying that freedom-value overrides option-value *in each possible world* — i.e. it does not amount to claiming that freedom has non-specific *unconditional* value. I am not assuming that *Independence* should be committed to this. It might be argued that when a set of option contains *worthless*, i.e. bad, options, or a number sufficient of them, its option-*dis*value can outweigh its freedom-value. As stated in the main text, the liberal repugnant conclusion does not cover *worthless* options, but only valueless ones. The liberal repugnant conclusion can be stated in the following extended form, where this is explicit:

*Extended liberal repugnant conclusion:* (1) for any possible set containing one or more valuable options, there must be another larger set containing only valueless options

whose freedom-value, if other things are equal, overrides the option-value of the former set, thereby making the latter more valuable than the former. However, (2) it is not the case that for any possible set containing one or more valuable options, there must be another larger set containing only *worthless* actions whose freedom-value overrides the action-disvalue of the former, thereby making the latter more valuable than the former.

The extended liberal repugnant conclusion entails that freedom-value can be overridden by option-*dis*value, but not by option-value — accordingly, more freedom is better than less whenever it does not involve the freedom to do worthless actions (in the latter case, freedom-value can be overridden by the badness of certain options). On unconditional value, see (Carter 1999: 37-41).

It might be claimed that certain sets of options have freedom-*dis*value — i.e. the freedom they allow involves general, non-specific costs that outweigh the benefits of being free; on this topic, see (Carter 1999: 61-3). Notice that the liberal repugnance conclusion does not amount to this claim: rather, its meaning is that freedom-value (i.e. the non-specific value of liberty) risks annihilating option-value (i.e. the specific value of certain actions, and of the specific freedoms to do them), and this annihilation is counter-intuitive. Accordingly, I am not denying that liberty has non-specific value *on balance*, to use Carter's language. I am rather claiming that if this is the case, then counter-intuitive consequences follow, and those consequences give sufficient support to denying that freedom has non-specific value *tout court*.

Sometimes, Carter seems to be leaning towards the view that the fact of having an extent of (even) *worthless* options available is a good thing. In the language I am using in this paper, this is to say that freedom-value can override option-disvalue. Discussing a point made by Kymlicka, Carter distinguishes 'having choice' from 'choosing', and maintains that having the choice to do a worthless action 'can be a good thing even if doing the latter would be bad' (Carter 1999, 39). This view amounts to the following version of the liberal repugnant conclusion:

*Strong liberal repugnant conclusion:* For any possible set of options containing one or more valuable options, there must be another larger set containing only *worthless* options whose freedom-value overrides the option-disvalue of the former set, thereby making the latter more valuable than the former.

It is not clear whether Carter seriously endorses the strong liberal repugnant conclusion (he seems to do so in his criticism of Sen's views, see for instance Carter 1999, 58-9), nor that such an endorsement is needed to argue in favour of *Independence*. I am not going to discuss the strong version of the liberal repugnant conclusion in this paper.

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, *Independence* contradicts also NVD, which is premise 5 in Argument I. This is shown in premise B of Argument II.

<sup>20</sup> Cp. (Dancy 1993, 60). See also (Price 2008).

<sup>21</sup> This does not necessarily imply that pleasure is the only good, as classical hedonists would suggest. It is sufficient that pleasure is *prima facie* good, and that it is one of many valuable things.

<sup>22</sup> I am not sure that this holds also for pains. Most of pains are evils, even when there features of the case that would make them unavoidable or necessary. Think of the

pains one suffers from doctors to be cured from illness, for example. Cp. (Dancy 1993, 55–6) for a different view, and (Price 2008, 187) for this point.

<sup>23</sup> Cp. (Kagan 1988, 14–8).

<sup>24</sup> Cp. (*ibid.*).

<sup>25</sup> The example of the joke funny when the butt is present is in (Dancy 2004, 172).

<sup>26</sup> (Dancy 2004, chaps. 9-10) claims that the Holistic view is the true view of value, valid in each and every case. I don't want to take issue on whether this stronger view is true. For my purposes here it is enough that the Holistic view is true in certain cases, and that it describes better than the Additive view the case in which freedom is at stake.

<sup>27</sup> Applied to Figure 3, the Importance thesis would produce

**Ranking 8.**  $S(7) > S(11) > S(8) > [S(9) = S(10) = S(n)]$ .

<sup>28</sup> A revised version of Argument I able to support the Importance thesis could sound as follows:

#### Argument I\*

- 1 **Ranking 2** is more plausible than **Ranking 1**.
- 2 *Considered judgments as prima facie evidences* (from now onwards CJE): Philosophical theses gain (part of their) support from their capacity to account for plausible considered judgements. Compatibility with many plausible considered judgements is a *prima facie* evidence in favour of a given thesis, and contradiction with respect to plausible considered judgements gives a *prima facie* evidence against.
- 3 In virtue of the assumption **ii.** above, so far as the value of options is concerned, Rose's and Vasilij's lives are equal.
- 4 Rose's and Vasilij's lives differ as to freedom. Rose's life is a free(r) life, because it contains a wider extent of options.
- 5 *No difference in value without differential factors* (from now onwards NVD): **a.** the value of a given thing *result* from certain features of the thing considered and/or the context where this thing is placed (the value of a rare book results from the fact that there are not many similar books in the world where it exists); then, **b.** if two things are different for their value they should be different as to other features (difference in values results from differences in other features).
- 6 Rose's and Vasilij's lives differ in value because they differ as to the extent of freedom contained in them. Their difference in value results from their difference in freedom (in virtue of 1., 4. and 5.).
- 7 *Grounds and enablers*: When a feature *affects* value (when value results from it), it does so either by *contributing* its value to the overall value or by *enabling* another feature to contribute its value.
- 8 In Rose's life, freedom enables valuable options to contribute their value to the overall value, thereby making Rose's life better than Vasilij's one (in virtue of 6. and 7.).
- 9 The valuable option present in Rose's life has a value because it is enabled by freedom, i.e. because it is one of many options.

- 10** Freedom has no value, but it is a condition in order that other features contribute their value.

<sup>29</sup> See (Carter 1999; 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Carter mentions the view that freedom is a condition for the overall value of state of affairs in (Carter 1999, 54). He seems to consider this view as amounting to the idea that freedom has constitutive value, and he admits that constitutive value can be non-specific; see (*ibid.*, 54-60). In the text I am suggesting that something can be a condition for the overall value of a state of affairs without being a valuable constituent of it.

<sup>31</sup> Michele Bocchiola helped me very much in revising the structure and the ideas of previous versions of this paper. Pietro Maffettone and Federico Zuolo read a previous version. Robert Audi gave me suggestions about the theory of value, during a presentation of a previous version of the paper at the University of Roma 3. Responsibility for the claims here defended is mine, though.

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